



Les Szurkowski, Canapress photo

## Taking the Fear out of Flying

There is also a long history of co-operation in wildlife protection. In 1916 Canada and the United States signed the Migratory Birds Convention Treaty, which has helped to maintain the populations of waterfowl and other birds that nest in Canada, migrate to the United States in the fall, and are hunted in both countries.

The story of the whooping crane shows what can be done. By 1941 there were only 16 of these regal, white birds left on the continent, but Canada and the United States have protected and nursed the small flock back to health. Now more than 160 wild birds migrate between the two countries, and the species appears to have been pulled back from the brink of extinction.

Canada and the United States are embarked on an even more ambitious project, that of preserving the great fall migration of tens of millions of ducks. This will require more than just controlling hunting. It also means saving the remaining wetlands that ducks need to raise their young.

Nearly a century of some of the most intensive farming anywhere has transformed the great plains of central North America into one of the world's biggest food-producing areas. The change has claimed much of the wildlife habitat, including thousands of tiny ponds in the northern United States and Canada that were breeding grounds for waterfowl.

In an effort to reverse the trend, Canada and the United States signed the North American Waterfowl Management Plan in 1986. Over the next 15 years it is to protect and improve more than 15 000 km<sup>2</sup> of wetlands, mainly in the Prairies, but also in Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes and parts of the United States. Governments are looking to private sources for much of the estimated \$1.5 billion needed. About \$1 billion is to be spent on the Canadian Prairies, and three-quarters of that money is expected to come from governmental and non-governmental sources in the United States.

Farther north, Canada and the United States face an even more difficult wildlife-management task with even higher stakes. At issue is the future of the barren-ground Porcupine caribou herd. An estimated 165 000 animals migrate across Alaska, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, and the herd is vital to the way of life of Canadian aboriginal peoples in the area.

The United States has created the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge which includes part of the calving grounds for the herd. Canada has created the North Yukon National Park which includes the Canadian portion of the calving grounds in adjoining territory. In recent years, however, there has been pressure from some business and political interests in the United States to allow oil and gas exploration in the coastal plain of the Alaska refuge. Canada's position is that the calving grounds should be given full wilderness designation within the U.S. system and that the two parks should be twinned to prevent further development.

Acid rain is suspected as one of the leading causes of forest decline.

## Sharing a Continent

In the future, Canada and the United States will undoubtedly face even more hard questions about how they are to protect and manage a shared environment that covers more than 13 per cent of the world's land mass and stretches from the high Arctic to the sub-tropics.

And there is much unfinished business. Air pollution remains a serious problem and the Great Lakes cleanup is far from over.

Nevertheless, the track record of the past 70 years shows that nations can settle even difficult disputes over common resources. It is an encouraging model for a world where so much co-operation will be needed to save a shared environment.



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